

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4134

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0017

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, BY, BE, FR

SUBJECT: BURUNDI REACTION TO DEPARTURE OF BELGIAN MILITARY AID GROUP

REF BUJUMBURA 1039 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OF STAFF EXPRESS DISAPPOINTMENT
AT DEPARTURE BELGIAN MILITARY ADVISORS, NOTE ALTERNATIVE
SOURCES ARMS SUPPLY, EXPRESS HOPE FOR ADDED FRENCH ASSISTANCE.

END SUMMARY

1. JANUARY 4 ISSUE OF GRB NEWS BULLETIN BEGIN UNDERLINE
FLASH-INFOR END UNDERLINE CONTAINS TEXT OF REMARKS MADE BY
PRESIDENT MICOMBERO, BURUNDI ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF COL.
THOMAS NDABEMEYE, AND BELGIAN AMBASSADOR CLAUDE RUELLE AT
DECEMBER 29 ARMY BANQUET HONORING MICOMBERO. BELGIAN AND
FRENCH MILITARY ASSISTANCE OFFICERS PRESENT, AS WELL AS
FRENCH CHARGE D'AFFAIRES. COPIES POUCHED ADDRESSEES.

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2. MICOMBERO REMARKS WERE OFF-THE-CUFF AND MADE AFTER

CONSIDERABLE CELEBRATING. THEY APPEAR, HOWEVER, TO REFLECT HIS VERY STRONG ADVERSE REACTION TO DEPARTURE OF BELGIAN ADVISORS, WHICH HE CALLS "UNILATERAL DECISION TAKEN AGAINST A SOVEREIGN COUNTRY". WHILE THANKING BELGIANS FOR PAST ASSISTANCE AND CLOSE RELATIONS OF ADVISORS WITH BURUNDI ARMY, PRESIDENT REMARKED THAT BELGIAN AMBASSADOR IS GOING TO HAVE A GOOD DEAL TO REPORT DURING THE COURSE OF 1974. ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT FRENCH WOULD NOT SOME DAY PULL OUT ALSO.

3. NDABEMEYE SOMEWHAT WARMER IN HIS THANKS AND MORE MUTED IN CRITICISM. NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT BURUNDI HAS NEVER HAD AS MUCH IN WAY OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION AS IT HAS ACQUIRED SINCE BELGIAN REFUSAL TO DELIVER. "EVEN BELGIAN FAL MATERIAL HAS REACHED US, WITH THE ONLY ADDITIONAL COST THAT OF A DETOUR." ALSO NOTED, ON MILITARY TRAINING AND ADVISORY SIDE, THAT ARMY WOULD "LIMP A LITTLE" BUT GRB VERY HOPEFUL.

4. NDABEMEYE REFERRED TO GREAT FRIENDSHIP OF FRANCE FOR BURUNDI AND CONSEQUENT RIGHT OF GRB TO BELIEVE THAT FRENCH MILITARY COOPERATION WILL INCREASE.

5. ACCORDING TO SOURCES PRESENT, HEAD OF BELGIAN MILITARY MISSION, MAJOR MARCHAL, MADE STRONG STATEMENT CRITICIZING FORMER BELGIAN AMBASSADOR PIERRE VAN HAUTE AND BELGIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY RE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO BURUNDI. RUELL'S REMARKS WERE LIMITED TO BRIEF STATEMENT OF THANKS AND TOAST TO BELGO-BURUNDI FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION.

6. COMMENT: CEREMONY, AND PARTICULARLY SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATION OF REMARKS, GIVE FURTHER INDICATION OF BURUNDI UNHAPPINESS OVER BELGIAN WITHDRAWAL, EVEN THOUGH ALLEVIATED AS NDABEMEYE NOTED, BY ASSISTANCE AND PROSPECTIVE ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES (PRIMARILY ARAB). BELGIAN EMBASSY NOT INCLINED GIVE WEIGHT MICOMBERO REMARKS OTHER THAN AS EXPRESSION HIS PIQUE. FRENCH CHARGE STATES THAT CURRENT FRENCH POLICY ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO AFRICAN COUNTRIES VIRTUALLY PRECLUDES INCREASE IN MILITARY AID TO

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